

FDA who will center public health and implement reforms to its review of opioids.

And, specifically, we need the FDA to conduct a full, comprehensive review of approved opioids as the National Academy of Sciences study recommends. We need to finalize strong rules for opioid approvals that require analysis of the impact of new drugs on opioid dependency and misuse. And the FDA needs to be aggressive in mitigating the risks of approved opioids by requiring robust prescriber education on opioids and performing regular, formal reviews of approved opioids.

These are not all the steps that must be taken, but with these, we can at least be sure that we are on the road to opioid misuse disorder reform; that there won't be another FDA green light in front of it.

Here in the Senate we must also commit to doing more to addressing the opioid overdose epidemic. Prescription opioid medications still lack a clear, concise, and consistent warning label informing patients of the risks of the drug for dependence and misuse.

Some physicians still lack the education and tools necessary to identify and help patients with substance use disorders. And, critically, treatment remains inaccessible and stigmatized for many people in need, especially those ensnared in the criminal justice system.

We have to pass legislation to address these concerns, and I stand ready to work with my colleagues. I recently introduced legislation with Senator RAND PAUL that would modernize the outdated and burdensome Federal regulations on methadone, one of the most effective forms of treatment for opioid use disorder.

We can do a lot. And working with Senator COTTON, I worked to promulgate and now we need to implement the recommendations of the Commission on Combating Synthetic Opioids Trafficking, and we need to do that this year.

We need leaders in all branches of the Federal Government to bring this aggressive, intentional approach to their work, if we have any hope of ending the epidemic of opioid overdose deaths.

Dr. Califf is simply not that person for the FDA, and I will vote no on his nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

UKRAINE

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I rise today in response to Russia's alarming and impending threat toward its neighbor, the independent nation of Ukraine.

As we speak, Vladimir Putin continues to ready more than 100,000 soldiers, tanks, artillery, aircraft, and missiles along Ukraine's border.

To Ukraine's north, in Belarus, Russia has positioned tens of thousands more troops, nominally, as part of a military exercise. To Ukraine's south, Russian ships are amassing in the Black Sea.

Propaganda and disinformation are on the internet and on Russian TV channels as part of the Russian playbook we now know very well.

The Kremlin's intent is to manufacture a pretext for its aggression and sow divisions in the West. Russian troops already occupy vast tracts of Ukraine in Crimea and continue a "low-grade" war in eastern Ukraine, a war initiated by Mr. Putin that has cost already over 14,000 lives. Ukrainian soldiers have been bravely fighting and dying to protect their country from what has been naked aggression from Russia.

We hear—even from Ukrainian leadership—that their forces would face an unequal fight in a full-scale Russian invasion and, unfortunately, probably couldn't help but be outnumbered and overwhelmed.

And while Moscow has amassed the largest concentration of military forces seen in Europe since the end of the Cold War, it continues to make shrill accusations that it is not Ukraine but somehow Russia that is under threat, all the while making demands that Ukraine never join NATO or control its own destiny.

Even as he threatens war with Ukraine, Mr. Putin demands to be treated as head of a normal government. He thrills at being given one-on-one meetings with other world leaders or being invited to diplomatic fora. He rails that Russia has been unfairly singled out for sanctions.

He demands respect, even as he lays out a thesis denying that Ukraine is—or ever was—a country with its own traditions, language, aspirations, or sovereignty.

What Mr. Putin really fears is that if Ukraine succeeds in building a nation where Ukrainian speakers and Russian speakers have genuine freedoms, can vote in free elections and control their own destiny—if that happens, then maybe Russians may start to wonder why they have to live in a country where Putin has practically made himself President for life, eligible to stay in office until 2036, where questioning the endemic corruption of the Russian state, trying to run a business without paying off officials, or even expressing an opinion can lead to detention, trumped-up charges, or, as we have too often seen, even death from a military-grade nerve agent.

Mr. Putin fears that Ukraine could prove to be a model of what Russia could become without his kleptocratic regime. Mr. Putin says he feels threatened by NATO. He wants to go back to the good old days, when the USSR held Eastern Europe—including Ukraine—in its iron grip. So he has decided to seize chunks of Ukrainian territory and unilaterally change Europe's borders.

Now, this isn't a new position for Putin. It reflects a long-held view. In 2005, he called the fall of the Soviet Union "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century."

In 2008, he invaded Georgia. When Russian troops seized control of Cri-

mea, he sent in his "little green men" and adopted his doctrine of hybrid warfare. He felt unconstrained to send agents of the Russian state to assassinate those he sees as his enemies, whether in Kyiv or London or Berlin or Sofia or Vienna.

And he has built up his arsenal and threatened his neighbors. Putin, as we know and have read about, has crushed even the slightest hint of political opposition at home in Russia—all of this while wanting to be seen as a victim and as the leader of a normal participant in the community of nations. These actions are not and cannot ever be accepted or acceptable by the civilized world.

So what can the United States and the West do? President Biden and other Western leaders have undertaken the right approach offering Putin multiple diplomatic off-ramps—as recently, again, as the visit by the German Chancellor this week—and a dialogue about Russia's exaggerated fears regarding European security.

Nobody wants a military conflict between two nuclear powers so the President has clearly stated that U.S. troops are not being sent to Ukraine to fight Russia.

At the same time, President Biden has made it extremely clear that if Russia rejects this diplomatic path and conducts further aggression against Ukraine, there will be a heavy price to pay. Russia will face the immediate imposition of strong, robust, and effective sanctions—including sectoral sanctions against its banking and financial system as well as stringent export controls that will damage Russia's economy.

At the same time, while we do not want to ensure that there are any miscalculations or an unintended escalation, the United States and European nations have increased their supply of defensive weapons to Ukraine to ensure that Putin knows that any invasion will impose costs on the Russian military. Mr. Putin may find that if he invades, he may not find the going so easy.

Ukrainians do not want to be part of Russia, especially at the point of a gun. As someone who has argued that Russia and Ukraine are one fraternal people, it will be difficult for Putin to explain why Russian soldiers are dying while trying to kill their Ukrainian brothers.

As a major part of his policy, President Biden has endeavored to keep NATO together and unified since one of Putin's major goals is to undermine that unity. The administration's approach is, frankly, significantly different from the previous President in this country, who undermined the transatlantic alliance, questioned the very need for its existence, and took every opportunity to weaken the shared bonds that have kept peace in Europe since World War II.

President Biden, though, has put thousands of U.S. forces on standby

and has deployed U.S. forces to NATO's eastern flank. I saw some additional troops from the 82nd heading over to Poland even as we speak. Now, again, these movements are not to inflame the situation but to ensure that there is no mistake about our commitment to NATO's collective defense, our willingness to defer aggression, and to make sure that we continue to bolster this critical alliance. The truth is, it is not just Americans. Other NATO members have agreed and are sending military forces to its eastern border to ensure that Putin knows that the alliance stands united.

Let us be very clear on who the aggressor is in these provocations. The eyes of the world have been on Vladimir Putin and Russia, as he has initiated a steady and deliberate buildup of Russian forces and military assets, as I mentioned earlier, to the north, east, and south of Ukraine, and he has rebuffed multiple diplomatic overtures to deescalate the situation. Through media reporting, satellite imagery, and intelligence shared by our government and by the British Government, much of Putin's incitement has been out in the open for all to see.

It is as clear today as it will be through the lens of history that this march of aggression has been led by one man, and that is Vladimir Putin. But it is important for Putin to know it is not too late to back down from this foolish and destructive course of action. Even at the eleventh hour, diplomatic avenues remain very much open. Putin can still choose against leading further aggression and invasion that would have the opposite effect from what he imagines.

While there have been some reports in the media that he may be moving, we have seen no clear efforts. This is clearly a case that we will believe what the Russians do, not what some of their leaders say, because if Putin does invade, he will have unleashed a tragedy not just for Ukraine but for the Russian people. Putin will rightly have earned the enmity of all free nations and people everywhere, and Russia's economy and citizens will suffer.

I want to be clear. In the event of an unwarranted, unjustified, and illegitimate attack on Ukraine, the United States will stand with the people of Ukraine. Russia will become a pariah nation, a rogue state. The legitimacy of Putin's regime will be significantly undermined. And the NATO alliance that Putin worries so much about? It will be reinvigorated to fulfill the mission it was created for: as a defensive alliance against Soviet or, now in the 21st century, Russian aggression.

I urge President Putin to choose the right path. Deescalate tensions. Don't just talk about deescalation but actually deescalate. Engage in a real and honest diplomatic process, and end any plans leading towards a violent confrontation in Ukraine. By doing this, he would ultimately spare Russia the crippling economic consequences that

would be necessitated by his aggression.

I also say, I was very proud yesterday, when the administration briefed the bipartisan leadership of all the committees that are dealing with this potential invasion, to see the broad and bipartisan support behind standing with the people of Ukraine and the message that should Putin take these actions, the level of sanctions that we will impose upon him and his economy will be unprecedented.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator BURR and I be permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes each prior to the vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF ROBERT MCKINNON CALIFF

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, I rise in opposition to the Biden administration's nomination of Robert Califf to be the FDA Commissioner.

As FDA Commissioner during the Obama administration, Mr. Califf showed blatant disregard for the unborn and for the health and safety of women and girls when he weakened safety and reporting requirements for a dangerous chemical abortion drug.

In fact, this past December, the Biden administration went further and announced it would eliminate entirely the in-person dispensing requirement for the abortion drug. This very reckless decision promotes mail order, do-it-yourself abortion-on-demand and disregards the growing threat to women's health posed by chemical abortion drugs. For example, without physician in-person screening, women are denied the opportunity to be screened for dangerous conditions like ectopic pregnancies, which can cause life-threatening complications.

Mr. Califf has refused to distance himself from the FDA's decision to abandon vulnerable pregnant women to the reckless and predatory actions of the abortion industry. Mr. Califf has a track record of putting an extreme abortion agenda above the science.

The nomination of Robert Califf to be FDA Commissioner endangers the well-being of unborn babies, women, and girls, and I urge my colleagues to join me in opposing his nomination.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I actually rise today to support Bob Califf and to say to my colleagues there has been a lot of criticism as to what he has done. I have never seen an FDA Commissioner, in 9 months of service—that was the length of his time at the FDA—who accomplished anything, much less as many negatives as have been raised.

But as the ranking member of the HELP Committee and as a fellow North Carolinian, I would like to share with my colleagues that Dr. Califf is a su-

premely qualified nominee with bipartisan support. He has the robust agency and private sector experience needed to help build on the success of the FDA in helping Americans get back to normal life with the approval of tests, vaccines, and therapeutics that are bringing the pandemic to an end.

He is the leader we need today but also for the future. Now, let me take a few moments to explain why.

It has been 391 days since the FDA has had a Senate-confirmed Commissioner—391 days. No matter how effective and successful an Acting Commissioner can be—and we have been blessed with Janet Woodcock's leadership—the full backing of a Presidential nomination and confirmation by the U.S. Senate carry a weight that allows a confirmed Commissioner to push forward necessary, meaningful change and leadership within a Federal Agency.

There has never been a more critical time for the FDA to have effective leadership. While the FDA has long played a leading role in the lives of the American people, regulating 20 cents of every dollar of the U.S. economy, the COVID pandemic brought the actions of the FDA during the response to the dinner-table conversation of every family in this country.

In the 391 days since our last confirmed Commissioner stepped down, there have been two new, serious variants of the COVID virus; case counts that topped 1 million per day; shortages of vital therapeutics and diagnostic tests; and, tragically, the loss of hundreds of thousands of American lives. The FDA has and will continue to play a leading role in our response to a once-in-a-century pandemic.

The Agency's unprecedented work helped innovators bring forward countermeasures, tests, treatments, and vaccines that have helped us withstand and fight against the virus and instill hope in Americans in some of the darkest moments of the pandemic. The FDA has made significant progress to advance medical product development.

As new cases continue to slow and spring approaches, we are at what I am hopeful is an inflection point. Mask mandates are lifting, children are back in school, and the FDA is ready to move into the next phase of the response that will hopefully bring us back to normal. The FDA needs a leader who will not lose sight of the progress it has made.

The silver lining of COVID has been its ability to show the value of American innovation and ingenuity. No one understands that better than Dr. Califf. His expertise at translational science means that he understands what it takes to transform an idea from a research bench into a real solution for patients.

COVID catalyzed the FDA and the private sector to compress the timeline of the transformation without—with-out—sacrificing our world-renowned gold standard for safe and effective